



12. Lot(s): 1-3 and 7-12 Block: 14
Addition: Boulder Original Townsite Year of Addition: 1868
13. Boundary Description and Justification: Bounded by the Civic Plaza to the North, the Boulder and White Rock/Left Hand Ditch and Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art to the South, the public parking lot to the East, and the 13th Street Community Plaza to the West.

III. Architectural Description

14. Building plan (footprint, shape): Predominantly Rectangular Plan
15. Dimensions in feet: Length 81'-4" x Width 52'-6 3/8"
16. Number of stories: One
17. Primary external wall material(s): Wood frame and stucco; ceramic wall tile and brick; wood
18. Roof configuration: Other roof
19. Primary external roof material: Asphalt roof
20. Special features: Roof treatment - decorative cornice; Ornamentation - decorative ceramic faïence tile panels.
21. General architectural description: *(For a detailed description and color photographs, see attached report)*
Rectangular 81'-4" x 40' Tajik Teahouse (Central Asian/Tajik Style) with polygonal shaped rear addition. The Teahouse is a prefabricated structure of about 2100 square feet and is ornately painted in the bright floral and geometric patterns of Central Asia and Persia. The Teahouse features intricately hand-carved and brilliantly painted wood trim cornice and decorative exterior "faïence" tile panels. The Teahouse has two parts: the Central Asian/Tajik Teahouse portion of the building and a utilitarian addition to the rear. The original Teahouse portion of the building (52'-6" x 40') houses the public restaurant and the addition houses the commercial kitchen, office space and public restrooms. The Teahouse is elevated above grade with a 4'-6" crawl space. The structural system is poured concrete foundation walls with footings supporting steel beam supports for the poured concrete floor. The original open-air Tajik design was modified to enclose the building from weather and to ensure that it would conform to required safety and building codes and structural and handicapped requirements. The original Teahouse portion of the building has triple-hung wood windows set in large extending shallow bays on three sides of the building, enclosing the hand-carved wood columns. Decorative exterior tile panels, framed with beige brick, flank the bay windows. At each corner of the Teahouse, two fixed windows meet at a right angle. The main entry is recessed with double doors and flanked by two triple-hung windows and one angled window on each side of the entry. An asphalt roof with a large central skylight covers the interior space and is located directly above the interior pool with statues. The addition to the Teahouse was designed to be subservient to the exuberantly decorated Teahouse. It features a flat roof and beige colored stucco covering wood frame walls with minimal fenestration.
- The Teahouse was originally designed as a raised open-air structure with open roof and coffered painted ceilings above a central pool. Thus the "interior features" were meant to be viewed as "exterior features." The fourteen intricate coffered ceilings are hand-carved and painted; no electric power tools were used in its construction. The coffers display images of flowers or foliage representing paradise along with stylized and simplified designs representing infinity. The unpainted carved slender columns, carved from a single tree, resemble a grove of trees and symbolically reach up toward the heavens and paradise. The Teahouse is an integration of art and architecture as seen through its interior features of carved ganch-kori plaster panels, modern abstract expressionist paintings, central pool with the "Seven Beauties" sculptures, and other items such as hand-carved and brightly painted tables ("topchans"), and hand painted octagon tables and benches.

22. Architectural style/building type: Other style
23. Landscaping or special setting features: The Teahouse is located in central Boulder adjacent to Central Park, Civic Plaza, 13th Street Community Plaza, and the Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art. The Teahouse is elevated from the street level and its site contains trellis covered terraced patios, rose gardens, the Boulder and White Rock/ Left Hand Ditch, the Teahouse Trail walking and bike path, and two bridges.
24. Associated buildings, features, or objects: n/a

IV. ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY

25. Date of Construction: Estimate: _____ Actual: 1988 & 1998
Source of information: City of Boulder Central Records, interviews and newspaper articles
26. Architect: Lado Shanidze and Vern Seieroe, AIA
Source of information: Architectural Drawings, City of Boulder Central Records
27. Builder/Contractor: City of Boulder and JDC Construction; Tajik master woodcarvers and joiners Manon Khaidarov and Mirpulat Mirakhmatov; Tajik master plaster carver and painter, Abdoukadir (Kodir) Rakhimov; Tajik master artist and ceramicist, Victor Zabolotnikov.
Source of information: City of Boulder Central Records, interviews and newspaper articles
28. Original owner: City of Boulder
Source of information: City of Boulder Central Records
29. Construction history (include description and dates of major additions, alterations, or demolitions):
From 1988 until 1990, over forty Tajik artists and master-craftsmen constructed the Teahouse in Dushanbe and Khujand, Tajikistan. The building was disassembled and sent to Boulder in 200 wooden crates, arriving in August 1990. From 1997-1998, with the assistance of Tajik artisans, the City reconstructed the Teahouse at its site on 13th Street, enclosing the building and adding a rear addition. *(For detailed description and color photographs, see attached report.)*
30. Original location x Moved Date of move(s):

V. HISTORICAL ASSOCIATIONS

31. Original use(s): Commerce/Trade-Restaurant; Social-Meeting Hall
32. Intermediate use(s): n/a
33. Current use(s): Restaurant
34. Site type(s): Teahouse
35. Historical background: *(For a more detailed description and color photographs, see attached report.)* In 1983, a group of Boulder citizens formed a sister city organization in order to establish a sister city relationship with a city in the Soviet Union. In start contrast to the political climate at the time between the United States and the Soviet Union, the organization sought to promote international friendship, peace and understanding. After much research, the organization pursued the city of Dushanbe, Tajikistan with which to partner. The relationship was formalized in May of 1987, at which time the Mayor of Dushanbe proposed a gift of a Tajik “Chaikhona.” A chaikhona is a building unique to Central Asia where people gather to meet friends, play chess, and enjoy a cup of tea. In December 1987, the drawings for the Teahouse were completed and construction began in Dushanbe and Khujand, Tajikistan, utilizing the skilled craftsmanship of over 40 artisans. In August 1990, the disassembled Teahouse arrived in Boulder in 200 crates weighing in at over 30 tons. After much debate and consideration, the Boulder City

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Council accepted the gift in May 1989 “as an important symbol of international friendship.” Over the next several years, the Boulder City Council convened several different committees to evaluate and discuss potential sites for the Teahouse. The Boulder-Dushanbe Sister Cities (BDSC) organization was charged with raising funds for the construction of the Teahouse and overseeing the operation and maintenance of the Teahouse. In April 1993, the Boulder City Council voted to place the Teahouse on the east side of 13th Street. In 1996, negotiations with a potential restaurant operator fell through when the site was considered contaminated due to previous uses. The City intervened and approved city financing for the construction of the Teahouse. An appointed committee solicited Teahouse operators and selected Sara and Lenny Martinelli as operators. In 1997, a groundbreaking ceremony was held and for the next ten months City crews, with the assistance of artisans from Tajikistan, erected the Teahouse. On May 15, 1998 a Dedication and Opening Ceremony celebrated the completed Teahouse. At the time of opening, the Teahouse was referred to as a “Boulder Landmark.”

36. Sources of information: City of Boulder Central Records; Peknik, The Meaning of the Boulder-Dushanbe Teahouse; Boulder’s Carnegie Branch Library for Local History; *Boulder Daily Camera* and numerous other newspaper and magazine articles. (For a complete listing, see Bibliography in attached report.)

VI. SIGNIFICANCE

37. Local landmark designation: Yes ____ No X Date of designation: _____

Designating authority:

38. Applicable National Register Criteria:

x A. Associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad pattern of our history;

____ B. Associated with the lives of persons significant in our past;

x C. Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or represents the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or

____ D. Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in history or prehistory.

G Qualifies under Criteria Considerations A through G (see Manual)

____ Does not meet any of the above National Register criteria

39. Area(s) of significance: Politics/Government, Social History, Architecture, Art

40. Period of significance: **1998**. From 1988 until 1990, Tajik artists and master-craftsmen constructed the Teahouse in Dushanbe and Khujand, Tajikistan. The building was disassembled and sent to Boulder in 200 wooden crates. From 1997-1998, with the assistance of Tajik artisans, the City reconstructed the Teahouse at its site on 13th Street.

41. Level of significance: National x State x Local x

42. Statement of Significance: The Boulder-Dushanbe Teahouse is a symbol of international friendship. It is eligible under Criterion A for *politics and government* for its representation of the international policy shift that took place during of the latter period of the Cold War when the United States and the Soviet Union (under the leadership of Reagan and Gorbachev, respectively) were working toward a more open society, to end the arms race, and move into a time of peace, understanding, and friendship. The Teahouse is a tangible example of that shift, as it was the only gift of a building from a city in the Soviet Union to a city in the United States.

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The Teahouse is also eligible under Criterion A for *social history* as it represents the success and intentions of the Sister City International Program first conceived after World War II by President Eisenhower to promote global understanding. The Teahouse represents the philosophy that social change and international peace begin with cooperation between individuals. The Teahouse represents the hope for peace between countries at conflict by developing person-to-person relationships and exchange of culture and ideas. The Teahouse gift of friendship from Boulder's sister city, Dushanbe, located in the former Soviet Union, is the only "chaikhona" (Central Asian/Tajik Teahouse) in the Western Hemisphere. At the time of the gift, the Teahouse was the largest gift ever given to an American city by the former Soviet Union and the only gift of an actual building between the Soviet Union-United States sister cities. "Although the Soviet Union has given other gifts to cities, states and the US government, nothing in the history of Soviet-US exchanges comes even close to this." (Molly Raymond, U.S. Information Agency, 1988)

Additionally, the Boulder-Dushanbe Teahouse is eligible for listing to the National Register under Criterion C for *architecture and art* as it embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, represents the work of a master, and possesses high artistic values. The Teahouse is an exceptional example of a traditional Central Asian/Tajik Teahouse, an architectural design tradition dating back to the Silk Road caravanserais of Persian/Tajik culture (2nd – 12th century AD). The Teahouse was constructed by master artists of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) Artist's Fund carrying out ancient trade skills including: master woodcarvers and joiners Mirpulat Mirakhmadov and Manon Khaidarov; master plaster carver and painter Abdoukodir Rakhimov; and, master artist and ceramicist Victor Zabolotnikov.

The Teahouse was originally designed by Dushanbe architect Lado Shanidze. Local Boulder architect, Vern Seieroe, finalized the design and adapted the open-air design to an enclosed year-round space. Seieroe traveled to Dushanbe to work with Tajik architect Lado Shanidze on the enclosure designs.

The Boulder-Dushanbe Teahouse displays high artistic value as seen in its intricately hand-carved and brilliantly painted wood trim and decorative exterior "faïence" tile panels. The Teahouse was originally designed as a raised open-air structure with open roof and coffered painted ceilings above a central pool. Thus the "interior features" were meant to be viewed as "exterior features." The fourteen intricate coffered ceilings are hand-carved and painted; no electric power tools were used in its construction. The coffers display images of flowers or foliage representing paradise along with stylized and simplified designs representing infinity. The unpainted carved slender columns, carved from a single tree, resemble a grove of trees and symbolically reach up toward the heavens and paradise.

The Teahouse is an integration of art and architecture as seen through its interior features of carved ganche-kori plaster panels, modern abstract expressionist paintings, central pool with the "Seven Beauties" sculptures, and other items such as hand-carved and brightly painted tables ("kat" or "chorpoi"), and hand painted octagon tables and benches. The construction is unusual in that it came halfway across the world as a prefabricated building and then was reassembled in Boulder.

Criterion G: The Teahouse rises to the high level of exceptional significance required under Criteria Consideration G because it is architecturally significant, maintains a high degree of integrity, is the only architectural gift, and largest gift, known between the former USSR and a city in the United States, and is the only Central Asian/ Tajik Teahouse in the Western Hemisphere. The

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Teahouse is a symbol of international friendship and represents an international collaboration of citizens, government leaders, architects, artisans, and builders.

Although 50 years has not yet passed since this gift was given, the importance of the gift within the context of the Cold War can be fully appreciated now. The USSR and the United States had been in a state of political conflict, military tension, propaganda warfare and economic competition since the late 1940s. At the time of the gift, the future relationship between the USSR and the United States was still unknown. The gift occurred during a small window of peace-seeking times between the Soviets and the Americans prior to the collapse of the Soviet Union. Following the break-up of the Soviet Union in 1991 and due to a drastically reduced budget for Tajikistan, the Artists Fund was disbanded. Mary Axe recalls that “during the 1980s under Gorbachev, the policy of glasnost was introduced which resulted in more openness, greater freedom of information and a revival of ethnic identities within the various republics. Absent this window, I doubt that Boulder would have received a traditional Tajik/Central Asian Teahouse.”

The Teahouse, which draws an estimated 100,000 visitors annually, has been recognized in George Peknik’s book, The Meaning of the Boulder-Dushanbe Teahouse and in a Rocky Mountain Public Broadcasting Network, Inc. DVD video titled “Colorado Spaces, Boulder.” The Teahouse was featured in the *Saudi Aramco World* magazine and in numerous newspaper articles found in the *Boulder Daily Camera*, the *Denver Post*, the *Boulder Weekly*, the *Boulder Planet* as well as covered by the press in Dushanbe, Tajikistan.¹ The following are excerpts representing the significance of the Teahouse locally, statewide, and nationally (see all articles in Appendix C of attached report):

“Although the Soviet Union has given other gifts to cities, states and the US government, *nothing in the history of Soviet-US exchanges comes even close to this.*” Molly Raymond, Deputy Coordinator of the President’s US-Soviet Exchange Initiative, a Committee of the US Information Agency, 1988

“Your efforts to open channels of communication between the citizens of the Soviet Union and the citizens of the United States are vital steps in the long march toward world peace. It is the foundation of mutual understanding that a long lasting peace will eventually rest.” Colorado Governor Richard Lamm, letter to Boulder’s Soviet Sister City Project

The Teahouse is “a very small dent in a very Cold War.” Ruth Correll, former Boulder Mayor, *Denver Post* article, July 11, 1997

“This chaikhona, though authentically Tajik, is located in Boulder, Colorado, and overlooked not by the Pamirs but by the Rockies. Eleven years in the making and a product of binational creativity, it is the only chaikhona in the Western Hemisphere.” “Rocky Mountain Chai” article, *Saudi Aramco World*, November/December 1998, Volume 49, No. 6

“Usually, sister cities exchange small gifts and students – not buildings. Part of the challenge comes from exchanging structures in countries that don’t have much in common when it comes to architectural process and design – not to mention different measurement systems. Add in language barriers, time differences and a quickly changing Tajik political landscape after the fall of the Soviet Union and you start to get the picture. We’re not talking about a government to government exchange, it really is people to people,” Don Mock, past president of the Board of Directors, BDSC, *Boulder Weekly*, March 29, 2007

“Next Friday, the teahouse – the largest gift ever given to an American city by the former Soviet Union – will open its doors for a grand tea party. We tip our hats to the many people who were responsible for making the teahouse a reality. Heading the list is Mary Axe, who never gave up the fight to get the teahouse pieced together and opened as a Boulder

¹ Those close to project, such as Mary Axe, have stated that the Teahouse received press coverage in Tajikistan. Due to the language barrier and without the assistance of an interpreter, a search of Tajikistan archives was not possible as part of this project.

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landmark.” “Eleven years ago, Boulder and Dushanbe became sister cities. You will recall that the world was much different in 1987. The Berlin Wall was firmly in place. The Soviet Union, which Tajikistan was then part of, was feared as a nuclear threat. And Boulder, like many US cities, was trying to extend a friendly hand to people entrapped behind the Iron Curtain.” *Boulder Daily Camera* Editorial, May 1998

"The Dushanbe teahouse will hold more than 2,000 years of history when the plaster carvings of Abdoukodir Rakhimov grace the walls of the gift from Boulder's Sister City." His art keeps the 'ganch' art form alive. Today, most are mass-produced from plaster molds. "What separates Rakhimov from other plaster carvers is the time he takes to carve the intricate designs...by hand." *Boulder Planet*, February 4, 1998

"Every time we see this extraordinarily beautiful treasure, we will be reminded that it represents an important bridge between our two cities... our two cultures." Linda Jourgensen, Mayor, City of Boulder, "Presenting the Tadzhik Chaikhona" pamphlet, 1990

"The hand workmanship found in the elaborate carved and painted wooden ceiling, the turned and carved columns and the panels of polychromed relief tiles is of high quality. I doubt that any other region of the Islamic world, with the possible exception of Morocco, has such a lively and creative tradition." John D. Hoag, Ph.D., Professor of the History of Art, "Presenting the Tadzhik Chaikhona" pamphlet, 1990

"By design and by tradition, the teahouse is meant to be a center for cultural activity where patient people can earnestly discuss events of their lives and of our community. In an age dominated by mass media, it will serve as a place where this other sort of communication will happen." Homer Page, Boulder County Commissioner, "Presenting the Tadzhik Chaikhona" pamphlet, 1990

"It will be a remarkable example of an artistic and architectural tradition which has continued for at least ten centuries. In fact, the Tajik master carvers and builders have remained true to these ancient traditions to an extraordinary degree." Renata Holod, Associate Professor and Chair, Department of the History of Art, University of Pennsylvania, BDSC Flier, 1990

"This teahouse, in my opinion, represents a wonderful example of Central Asian artistic achievement. Design elements such as its hand-carved cedar columns, the intricate details of its enamel tile panels and the hand-crafter ornamentation harkens back to the centuries-old Persian artistic tradition characteristic to Central Asia in the Soviet Union." Elizabeth Cunningham, Curator, The Anschutz Collection, BDSC Flier, 1990

"The teahouse, the largest gift ever presented in the United States by a former Soviet state, should be ready for tea drinkers next spring." *Denver Post* article, July 11, 1997

"...the Teahouse was built, and I want to tell you that it has become one of the most important buildings, one of the most important places in our city." Boulder Mayor Shaun McGrath, *Boulder Daily Camera* article, September 23, 2008

43. **Assessment of historic physical integrity related to significance:** The Teahouse maintains a high degree of integrity and although originally designed as an open-air structure, architects Lado Shanidze and Vern Seieroe worked together on the enclosure design which retains the integrity of the Tajik architect's traditional design. Seieroe designed the rear kitchen/restroom addition to be smaller and simpler both in terms of scale, mass and detail. The addition does not detract from the architectural integrity of the main Teahouse building.

VII. NATIONAL REGISTER ELIGIBILITY ASSESSMENT

44. National Register eligibility field assessment:

Eligible ☒ Not Eligible ☐ Need Data ☐

45. Is there National Register district potential? Yes ☐ No ☒

Discuss:

If there is National Register district potential, is this building: Contributing ☐ Noncontributing ☐

46. If the building is in existing National Register district, is it: Contributing ☐ Noncontributing ☐

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VIII. RECORDING INFORMATION

47. Photograph numbers: 5458.JPG, 5385.JPG, 5452.JPG, 5432.JPG, 5393.JPG, 5435.JPG, 5392.JPG, 5439.JPG, 5384.JPG, 5435.JPG, 5438.JPG, 5427.JPG, 5426.JPG, 5435.JPG, 5428.JPG, 5389.JPG, 5460.JPG, 5391.JPG, 5390.JPG, 5414.JPG, 5333.JPG, 5420.JPG, 5415_1.JPG

Digital Images filed at: City of Boulder Planning Department and/or Boulder's Carnegie Branch Library for Local History

48. Report title: Boulder-Dushanbe Teahouse Historic Context and Survey Report, October 2010

49. Date(s): 2010

50. Recorder(s): Lara Ramsey and Kathryn Howes Barth, AIA

51. Organization: n/a

52. Address: Lara Ramsey, 7713 N. 41st Street, Niwot, CO 80503; Kathryn Barth, 2940 20th Street, Boulder, CO 80304

53. Phone number(s): Lara Ramsey (303.419.7784); Kathryn Barth (303.440.5970)

NOTE: Please include a sketch map, a photocopy of the USGS quad map indicating resource location, and photographs.

Colorado Historical Society - Office of Archaeology & Historic Preservation
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